ML BULLETIN

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FROM SLIDE TO FILM: A DISSOLVING VIEW

Although the principle of intermittent motion picture film projection was developed in the late 1860's, it was not until the mid-1890's that projection was actually achieved with any degree of success. In the interval, the Kinetoscope was developed in Thomas A. Edison's New Jersey laboratories by an Englishman, W. K. L. Dickson. This device used a strip of film showing a sequence of motion, but the images were viewed through peepholes in the machine rather than being projected upon a screen.

Experimenters in several countries drew upon knowledge of projection techniques gained through experience with magic lanterns to solve the problem of projecting the new action films. Within a few years, projected motion pictures had become an established form of entertainment and information.

In 1978, ML Society member Charlie Musser developed a series of programs on early film-making for presentation at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He was particularly intrigued by the integration of motion picture film and magic lantern slides in a single program to provide continuity and special effects not possible with either medium used separately. He has described some of these early developments for the Bulletin:

The decade between 1895 and 1905 was a key transitional period in cinema history, Musser says.

Many well-known lanternists seized eagerly upon the new technological innovation to enliven their own programs, and they tried to explain it to others. "A film for projecting a living picture," Henry V. Hopwood wrote in Living Pictures (1899), "is nothing more than a multiple magic lantern slide." This is an oversimplification, of course, but with elements of truth; for the cinema, Musser says, is both a continuation and a transformation of the magic lantern tradition.

By the late nineties, many projectors were equipped to show both films and slides and could cut rapidly back and forth between the two. In Animated Photography (1897), Cecil Hepworth advised, "Undoubtedly the best plan is to show one or two magic lantern slides between each animated photograph. The still photograph is a great relief to the eyes..after the tiring living photograph." Hepworth's concern for the eyes of his audience was valid; the early films were jerky and of poor quality.

There were other reasons, also, for combining films and slides, Musser says. The selection of films was limited, while the supply of high quality photographic slides was extensive. Films were so expensive that few exhibitors could afford programs consisting of motion pictures alone. They were also short--too short to accommodate the wordy lectures lanternists were accustomed to giving. Using slides was a good way to stretch out the program and allow the lanternist to deliver his graceful flow of words.

To achieve acceptable length, a motion picture program had to consist of several brief, unrelated films. By interspersing magic lantern slides, the lanternist could keep his audience amused, rather than leaving them in darkness while he threaded up the next film.

The magic lantern had been extensively used for educational purposes for many decades, but the new technique greatly enhanced the vitality of educational programs. During the Spanish American War, history came alive in a new way for audiences when the Vitagraph Company offered WITH DEWEY IN MANILA, "a story of the

Glorious Victory as related by an eye-witness on board the Flagship Olympia, illustrated by Lantern Slides and Actual Moving Vitagraph Pictures." By the turn of the century, magic lantern distributors were offering numerous combination programs.

Slides and films were also used together, Musser says, because the contrast between static and moving images could be dramatically effective. In Came the Dawn, Hepworth reminisced about a show he had given combining the two techniques and adding a rousing piano accompaniment:

> I remember one little series which always went down very well indeed. It was called THE STORM and consisted of half a dozen slides and one forty-foot film. My sister Effie was a very good pianist and she travelled with me on most of these jaunts. The sequence opened with a calm and peaceful picture of sea and sky with soft and gentle music (Schumann, I think). That changed to another seascape, though the clouds looked a little more interesting, and the music quickened a bit. At each change, the inevitability of a coming gale became more insistent and the music more threatening; until the storm broke with an exciting film of dashing waves bursting into the entrance of a cave, with wild music (by Jensen, I think). I did the commentary, of course, as well as working the lantern and the films.

Magic lantern buffs, Musser concludes, may like to think of this transitional period of cinema history as a dissolving view: as they watch, the magic lantern and its slides--popular favorites for so many years--give way to the film projector and the fascinating new phenomenon of motion pictures.

Editor's note: In The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, John Barnes reports a spectacular combination program planned by Robert William Paul in 1895. This was to be a "time machine" which would carry visitors into the future or the past. The spectators, seated on enclosed platforms facing a screen, would experience an illusion of traveling through time and space as the motorized platforms began to rock and a blast of air passed over them. "A suitable period having elapsed, representing, say, a certain number of centuries," Paul wrote, an appropriate lantern slide scene would appear upon the screen, such as "a hypothetical landscape." Across this would pass some object such as a navigable balloon, also produced by a slide. Then would come a film in which "made up characters" performed against a stage setting that blended with the original lantern slide landscape. Superimposed over the film would be "coloured, darkened or perforated slides" producing effects of sunlight, moonlight, rain, etc. To top it all off, Paul planned to have his audience step out of their enclosures into "grounds or buildings arranged to represent exactly one of the epochs through which the spectator is supposed to be traveling." Then--back they would go into their "time machines," which would jostle them once more into 1895--after, of course, purposely overshooting and projecting them into an opposite era from the one they had just visited. Barnes reports laconically that Paul's project never materialized. What a pity!

John Barnes, author of The Beginnings...., is Curator of the Barnes Museum of Cinematography in St. Ives, Cornwall, England. His book, a meticulous account of who patented what and who made which early British films, was published by Barnes and Noble, New York, in 1976.

CONSERVATION OF MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES: TIPS FROM THE OLD PROJECTIONIST

Bob and Carmeletta Bishop of Seabeck, Washington, are among the Society's most active show-givers. For 15 years, they have traveled the country, giving shows at festivals, fairs, schools, colleges, hospitals and army camps. They tailor the subject matter to the

interests of the audience, whether these be astronomy, the Temperance Movement, Halloween spooks, some aspect of history or a sing-along using illustrated song slides. Billing himself as "The Old Projectionist," Bob appears in Gay Nineties regalia complete with stovepipe hat.

The Society has received several requests for information on methods of cleaning and conserving magic lantern slides. Bob has offered some entertaining and informative tips:

"It is said confession is good for the soul," Bob writes, "So--I acknowledge being guilty of increasing the wattage on my show lantern from 300 on each side to 500, and upon occasion for extremely long throws of 175-200 feet, to 750 watts on each side. I also plead no contest to leaving handpainted slides too long in the lantern, thus fading them out to a degree which spoiled them for future projection. I have cracked slides in the same manner.

"Now of course, this was years ago. I soon learned that light, heat and dampness are the enemies of all types of magic lantern slides. One solution is to improve light control so lower wattage bulbs can be used. Another is to install fans in the lanterns to keep the temperature within reasonable bounds."

In a small theater with a close throw, Bishop adds, very low wattage bulbs can be used. Doug and Anita Lear, proprietors of the tiny Narrowboat Theatre in England, report that they use 20 watt projection bulbs in a 12 volt rear projection system.

Safe storage for lantern slides can be a problem, Bob says, since the size of most American homes makes it necessary to use the basement, attic or garage. He and Carmeletta store theirs in the basement and find their slides have suffered no perceptible damage even when the house has been unoccupied for periods as long as a year. To protect the slides, Bob has made covered wooden boxes. Slides seldom used are encased in clear plastic sandwich bags through which his identification numbers can be read.

Protecting slides against breakage while being transported to shows is difficult, no matter how carefully they are packed, Bob says, and repairing them is usually not entirely satisfactory. When a slide is cracked or has a missing piece, he sometimes lays over a very thin cover glass and rebinds the slide. When a cover glass cannot be used, it is sometimes possible to rejoin broken parts of slides with some product such as Krazy Glue, but the crack will show and will affect the slide emulsion. But, he adds, "It is not always to the disadvantage of a program to have an occasional crack appear in the projected image. It lends an extra air of antiquity, much like cobwebs in an old house."

Usually Bob and Carmeletta limit restoration of their slides to filling in background or blackout areas; but recently when one of the sliders of a favorite double slip-slide "Ratcatcher" broke, leaving the snoring gentleman minus his beard, Bob attempted more extensive repair. "I cut a new glass and painted a new chin piece. But I found my smallest efforts out of proportion. I finally used a single hair from a fine brush to lay on individual whiskers--only to find that when projected, they looked like match sticks." So it was back to the glue pot for the original slides, and the Ratcatcher once more has his own beard. By good fortune, the crack is hidden under other details of the slide.

Bob attributes much of his knowledge of the lanternist's art to his mentor Laurence Denny Lindsley, who continued to give shows until he was nearly 90. Bob sometimes served as his "mule" to pack his lantern and slides. When checking the slide sequence just before his last show, Lindsley noted that not all the slides met his standard of cleanliness--essential to clear projection. His method of cleaning brought a look of astonishment to Bob's face. "Think nothing of it," Lindsley joshed. "Magic lantern men have been using SPIT for quick clean ups for as long as glass has been used. It removes spots, dust and smoke and imparts a sheen which improves the projection." Over the years, Bob says, "I have found he was not joshing me at all."

Editor's note: Bob Bishop has touched upon some very important issues in the care and conservation of lantern slides. Here is a summary of some points to keep in mind:

- Always protect your slides from exposure to heat and light, which cause the colors to fade and paint to crackle and flake off. Never display them in sunlit windows, as antique dealers often do. They will be destroyed within a few days.

- In damp weather or environments, the varnish on colored slides becomes tacky. Many of the slides for the "toy" lanterns (the small, home-entertainment type) do not have cover glasses. It is therefore important to store slides so that the painted side of each rests only against the clear glass side of the next to minimize sticking and peeling.

- It is preferable to store slides in slotted boxes with dividers that keep them from touching each other, but this is not usually feasible with large, space-consuming personal collections. So storage might as well be fun. An old Clark's spool cabinet is ideal. Location of sets can be indicated by typed labels on the top edge of each drawer.

- Slides can be identified individually or in sets by easily removable stick-on dots. Always put these on on clear glass side, never on the painted side.

- Never use any liquid cleaner on the painted side of slides which lack a cover glass. If very dirty, dust with a fine camel's hair brush, but be very gentle to avoid flaking off the paint. The clear glass side may be wiped with a tissue or lint-free cloth or cleaned with water or glass cleaner, but take care not to get the paper border wet.

- Whether or not damaged slides should be restored depends in part upon the purpose of your collection. If you hold it primarily as a "collector's item," restoration should probably be limited to simple cleaning. If you use your slides either in private or public shows, touching up the dark backgrounds and the blackout areas of slip slides will improve the projected image.

Paint should be of a density and type which matches that used on the slide. This much restoration seldom decreases the slide's value.

. Extensive restoration of the colored images is very tricky business and should be attempted only by skilled experts. Those who answer this description will wish to read Janet Tamplin's article, "The Conservation of Magic Lantern Material," in The New Magic Lantern Journal, vol. I #1, April 1978, published by the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain. If you must touch up the colored parts, Ms. Tamblin advises that this be done on the clear glass side so the restoration can be removed without damage to the original paint. To avoid damaging slides when using electric light for illumination, Ms. Tamplin suggests a limit of 150 watts with 275 as an absolute maximum.

. Small, hometype lanterns should of course use lower wattage bulbs. For informal shows, it is fun to use the original kerosene lamps with the small lanterns. Motel proprietors and cottage landladies passing by have been known to be baffled by the sight of flickering images on the interior walls of their establishments when these are occupied by collectors on buying trips!

. Never use more illumination than you need. What appears to be inadequate light may be due to poor placing of the light source. It must be properly aligned both vertically and horizontally with the reflector and the lenses to give a proper image. The correct position can only be determined by experimentation. Once you find it, make yourself some firm support which will hold the light steady in the desired position. One of our illuminants consists of a light bulb in a screw socket which is taped to an inverted, empty cat food can.

KOCH'S CORNER: THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

ML Society Chairman Joe Koch (pronounced Cook) has some thoughts he'd like to share with you:

. National Convention. It's time to think about one. It will take a lot of planning and effort. Since the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain will probably

have its convention in Brussels, Belgium, in July 1980, we should avoid a schedule conflict. Perhaps we might hold ours in odd years, which would mean our first one would be in 1981.

I would like to see the first one held in the Midwest, perhaps in Kansas City or Minneapolis. Some member living in or near the convention city would have to make the arrangements for accommodations and meeting rooms. The convention might start on a Friday and conclude with a banquet on Saturday night. The agenda might include opening remarks by the chairman, talks by one or more members on some aspect of lanternalia, an exhibit of each member's most unusual items, an auction or buy/sell/trade event and--of course!--at least one magic lantern show.

Please send me:

- your thoughts regarding time and place of the convention
- your suggestions for the program
- your offer to serve as volunteer host and arrangement-maker.
- Election of Officers. Most of you have agreed that we should keep our organization as informal as possible during its early years, but we do have to have officers in order to keep functioning. I feel that officers should not serve for more than two years in any one position and that we should strive for equal geographical distribution. As our official beginning was Jan. 1, 1979, my two years will expire Dec. 31, 1980 (provided the membership wishes me to continue for the second year). Please let me know your thinking about these matters and how the elections should be handled, since we are such a scattered group. I think we will need both nominations and volunteers for office.
- Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain. Some of you may wish to join this society, which draws upon the many fascinating resources of England. Membership is open to any person over the age of 18. Annual subscription rates are:

Standard	L 6.00
Full time student	L 3.00
Family (husband & wife)	L 9.00
Institution	L 10.00

Check your local newspaper for rate of exchange from British pounds to American dollars. Checks or U.S. International Postal Money Orders should be made payable to The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain and sent to Mike Smith, Nether Lane, Nutley, East Sussex, England.

Back issues of Vol. I, numbers 1 and 2 of the society's excellent publication, The New Magic Lantern Journal can be ordered at L 1.00 per copy plus postage. A reduction of 25% is given on orders of 10 or more copies of each.

The British society has issued a list of "readings" or narratives that go with various sets of slides which are in the possession of society members. Copies of these can be purchased for use with your own slides by contacting the owner through Mike Smith. The list consists of 879 titles and gives the number of slides in the set and a code identification of the owner. For security reasons, the British society does not publish the addresses of its members, but Mr. Smith will gladly forward all inquiries. If you wish a copy of the list of titles, send me (Joe Koch) $1.00 to cover costs of reproduction and postage.

. Membership List. It has been our policy to circulate an annual list of members' names, addresses, phones and major interests. We also plan to publish the names of new members in each issue of the Bulletin. Any member is free to request that his address not be circulated. Please let me know your thinking on this. Should we continue our present policy?

. Visitors. Alice and I welcome the chance to get to know any of the members. We had a delightful time recently talking about magic lanterns with Henry Van Lieshout of Great Falls, Montana--or "Dutch," as he is called there-who spent a day with us.

THE SUGGESTION BOX

Bob Bishop reports that he has suggested that Mike Smith of the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain discuss with his members whether they would be interested in a reciprocal arrangement to "open up their homes" to visiting members of the American society in order to cut costs of accommodations. Bob wishes to know whether the members of our society would like to participate in such an exchange.

Editor's note: I hope many of you will respond both to this query and to the questions raised by Joe Koch regarding the convention, election of officers and publication of membership lists. Write them individually, but please also share your thinking with other members through the Bulletin.

CAN YOU TELL ME?--QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MAGIC LANTERNS

Q: I would appreciate learning through the newsletter about the care/preservation/restoration of lantern slides. Also, is it considered good policy or detrimental to the artifact to restore a badly rusted box by careful refinishing and repainting? Nancy A. Bergh, 1324 West Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, Minn. 55419.

A: Thanks for the suggestion. See the article in this issue on slide conservation. In regard to restoration of lanterns, the advice of most collectors and projectionists seems to be to do the minimum necessary to make the lantern attractive and useful. As with slides, the answer depends in part upon the purpose of your collection--whether personal enjoyment, giving shows or reselling is your goal. Certainly a good clean-up is indicated as a start in any case.

In restoring a rusty lantern, the first step is to clean off the rust without scratching the undamaged portions. Try rust remover applied with a Q-tip and gentle scraping. Wash the entire lantern surface with mild detergent and dry very thoroughly. Then consider what to do next: try to match the color

and type of finish and do a touchup job, repaint completely, or leave the damaged spots unfinished but clean and attractive.

Remember that many lanterns are not painted but are made of Russian iron (the dark green and charcoal gray or black ones) in which the color is an integral part of the material. Remember also that lanterns become very hot while in use, so any paint used must be capable of withstanding high temperatures without discoloring or peeling.

The brass portions of lanterns respond beautifully to brass polish. Inexpensive lanterns often have other types of metal trim. Some of these take a good polish and some don't, but all are improved by cleaning. The reflector should be kept polished, but scratching must be avoided. Clean lenses are essential to good projection, and any good glass cleaner and lint-free cloth will serve the purpose.

BUY/SELL/TRADE

Even with the time of your officers and Bulletin Editor donated and material for articles contributed without charge by other members, production costs of the Bulletin are high. To help defray the costs of paper, typing and postage, a charge of 10¢ per word will be made for Buy/Sell/Trade items. Name, address and phone number will be free. Ads will be accepted only from Society members. All Buy/Sell/Trade items and your remittance should be sent to Alice Koch, Treasurer, 819 14th Street NE, Auburn, Washington 98002. Please pay when you send in your item.

Wanted: Polyrama Panoptique and slides for same. Also optical toys of any kind, especially old wooden, brass or unusual kaleidoscopes. Please describe and give price and condition. Sidney Malitz, M.D., Box KH, Scarsdale, N.Y. 10583; phone (914) 636-5171.

Sell: Members interested in old cameras, stereo views and books on photography may wish to write John S. Craig, photographic historian, P.O. Box 656, Norfolk, Connecticut 06058, for a copy of his catalogue. His June 1979 catalogue lists one magic lantern book: Louis Wright's Optical Projection, London 1891.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: Total members: 36. For your first and annual listings, we will include your occupation and your special interests without charge. After that, list your interests in the BUY/SELL/TRADE column. Please include spouses names if they share your ML interests, give your zip codes and telephone area codes.

ARMOUR, Allan A., 501 E. 79th St., New York, N.Y., 10021, BU 8-9600 or Toll Free (800) 223-5773. Corporation president. Buy/Sell/Trade all types of lanterns.

Eipper, Rolf, Box 66075, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V5N 5L4, phone 873-2128. Photo technician and president of Photo. Hist. Assn. of Western Canada. B/T all types lanterns, animated slides, literature, kinetic, optical, stereo, vintage cinema.

Loucks, Grant, 1430 Cahuewga Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. 90028, (213) 466-3561. Vintage cameras, 16-35 mm projectors and accessories.

MARONN, Peter, 180 Goodwin St., Bristol, Conn. 06010, Home 589-6984, bus. 584-0501. B/S/T lanterns and local historical slides. Gives local history slides shows.

Spiegel, Don, 21872 3rd Ave., Langley, B.C., Canada, V3A 4P3. Audio-visual specialist. Interested in oil-illuminated lanterns, mechanical and animated slides, photo literature, sterescopes and cameras.

CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

The contents of the Bulletin is based upon material and queries received from members. How useful and interesting the Bulletin is will depend upon the volume and quality of material submitted. Since one purpose of the Society is to get people of like interests acquainted with each other, we hope to feature material contributed by different members in each issue. Length for historical, technical and personal experience items is 250-500 words. Please also send suggestions for topics you'd like discussed, updates on activities of members, notices of newly published articles or books on magic lanterns and related topics, and questions to which you would like the Bulletin or other members to respond. Queries from

non-members, unless of general interest, will be answered by members of the society in whose field of expertise the question lies. Please send all items for publication (except the BUY/SELL/TRADE column) to Leora Wood Wells, Editor, ML Bulletin, 7101 Woodland Drive, Springfield, Virginia 22151.

Other new members;

Richard Balzer (Home) 202 244-8878
5360 MacArthur Blvd. N. W. (business) 202 338-2933
Washington, D. C. 20016
He is a writer, photographer, lawyer. His interests are biunial, single & toy lanterns, chromotropes, and dissolving sets. Also, has interests in early catalogues and literature. He gives specialty shows for children and adults. He will buy, sell, trade.

Al Simon (home)212 423-2288
18-15 215th St. (business) 212 937-4700
Bayside, N.Y. 11360
He is employed by The Astoria Motion Picture Studios. He is interested in all lantern, theatrical, arts and cinema slides, same literature, various kinetic devices, various cinema vintage type and will buy.